

In the Specification:

Please delete the paragraph beginning on page 3 at line 19, and ending on page 4 at line 6, and replace with the immediately following paragraph (Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification by the current amendment.):

The midsection of the needle is encased in a needle holder to rigidly attach the needle to the needle holder. The needle holder includes a cylindrically shaped section positioned over the second section of the needle and centered on the second axis. For the present invention, the cylindrical section of the needle holder extends beyond the second section of the needle in the proximal direction to guard the end of the second section of the needle. Additionally, the diameter of the cylindrical section is sized to fit over the distal end of the syringe body and create a tight seal between the syringe body and the cylindrical section when the needle cartridge is engaged with the syringe body. The needle cartridge further includes a sheath that is disposed over the first section of the needle and slideably mounted on the needle holder. Preferably, the sheath is substantially shaped as an elongated cylinder having a lumen. Specifically, the sheath is centered on the first axis and slideably mounted on the holder to allow the sheath to move relative to the holder and in the direction of the first axis. For this purpose, the sheath is disposed within a hole provided in the holder. A guide can be mounted on the needle and disposed within the lumen of the sheath to maintain the sheath centered on

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the first axis. The midsection of the needle passes through a slit in the sheath. Preferably, the slit extends axially along the sheath to allow the sheath to move relative to the needle.

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Please delete the paragraph beginning on page 10 at line 6, and ending on page 10 at line 17, and replace with the immediately following paragraph (Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification by the current amendment.):

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Important for the present invention, the needle cartridge 14 includes a sheath 48 that is disposed over the end of the first section 34 of the needle 32 and slideably mounted on the needle holder 44. Preferably, as shown, the sheath 48 is substantially shaped as an elongated cylinder having a lumen 50. Specifically, the sheath 48 is centered on the first axis 40 and slideably mounted on the needle holder 44 to allow the sheath 48 to move in the direction of the first axis 40, relative to the needle holder 44. For this purpose, the sheath 48 is disposed within a hole 52 (also shown in Fig. 1) provided in the needle holder 44. An optional guide 54 can be mounted on the needle 32 and disposed within the lumen 50 of the sheath 48 to maintain the sheath 48 centered on the first axis 40. A slit 56 extends axially along the sheath 48 to allow the sheath 48 to move relative to the needle 32.

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Please delete the paragraph beginning on page 21 at line 2, and ending on page 21 at line 15, and replace with the immediately following paragraph (Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification by the current amendment.):

Q<sup>3</sup> A self-sheathing dental needle includes a finger grip slideably mounted to a syringe body and a plunger to expel a fluid medicament from the syringe body. The finger grip is formed with a tang that is positioned near the distal end of the syringe body when the finger grip is fully advanced in the distal direction. A needle cartridge is provided having a needle mounted in a needle holder, a sheath slideably mounted to the needle holder, and a lock body for locking the sheath in position over the distal end of the needle. When the cartridge is attached to the syringe body and aligned, the lock body can be reconfigured to release the sheath for movement relative to the needle. Specifically, the finger grip can be translated to cause the tang to engage the lock body, release the sheath, and expose the distal end of the needle.

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